Letting off North Korean ship

1511. SHRI RAJEEV SHUKLA: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether a North Korean ship caught and later released by the Coast Guard and Customs off the port of Kandla in 2000, was carrying missile spares to Pakistan for its clandestine programme;

(b) whether the ship was allowed to leave against intelligence warning at the instance of Ministry of External Affairs which accepted the captain's plea that the ship was bound for Libya; and

(c) whether it was serious breach of national security in view of the fact that Islamabad has test fired missiles capable of carryig nuclear warheads with the obvious help of North Korea?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) No. Sir.

(b) and (c) Do not arise.

Indo-US Air Force joint exercise at Agra

1512. SHRI YADLAPATI VENKAT RAO: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Indian Air Force an US Air Force have held joint exercises at Agra in India;

(b) if so, the benefits that will accrue to Indian Air Force by these exercises;

(c) the number of aircrafts and Air Force personnel of both services that took part in these exercises;

(d) whether such joint exercises by defence forces of the two countries are to be held in future also; and

(e) if so, details of the same?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) benefits which will accrue to IAF would be:

(i) Promotion of mutual goodwill

(ii) Understanding procedures of US Air Force

(iii) familiarisation with equipment available with US Air Force

(iv) Learning from the capabilities and experience of U.S. Air Force

(c) Two exercises were held at Agra:

(i) Ex Balance Iroquois

(ii) Ex Cope India

It would not be in the national interest to give details of number of Aircrafts and Air Force personnel of both services, that took part in these joint exercises.

(d) Yes, Sir.

(e) It would not be in the national interest to give details of such joint exercises, which are being planned.

Vacating Loonda Post in LoC, Kashmir

1513. SHRI AIMADUDDIN AHMAD KHAN (DURRU): Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether on July 29, Indian Infantry troops backed by Indian Air Force air power launched a massive attack on the Loonda post in machal sector on the Indian side of the Line of Control in Kashmir to get rid of the Pakistani troops who had occupied this strategic post; and

(b) if so, whether the Pak troops had occupied the post in another minikargil like operation without being detected, if so, whether any inquiry into the mini intrusion and occupation of the strategic post has been caused and with what result?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) and (b) It is not factually correct that the Pakistan troops had occupied a strategic post on our side of the Line of Control which necessitated a massive attack by Indian troops and air force on Loonda post in Machal sector. However, in the last week of July 2002, there was a minor Pakistan intrusion, approximately 800 meters on our side of the Line of Control in